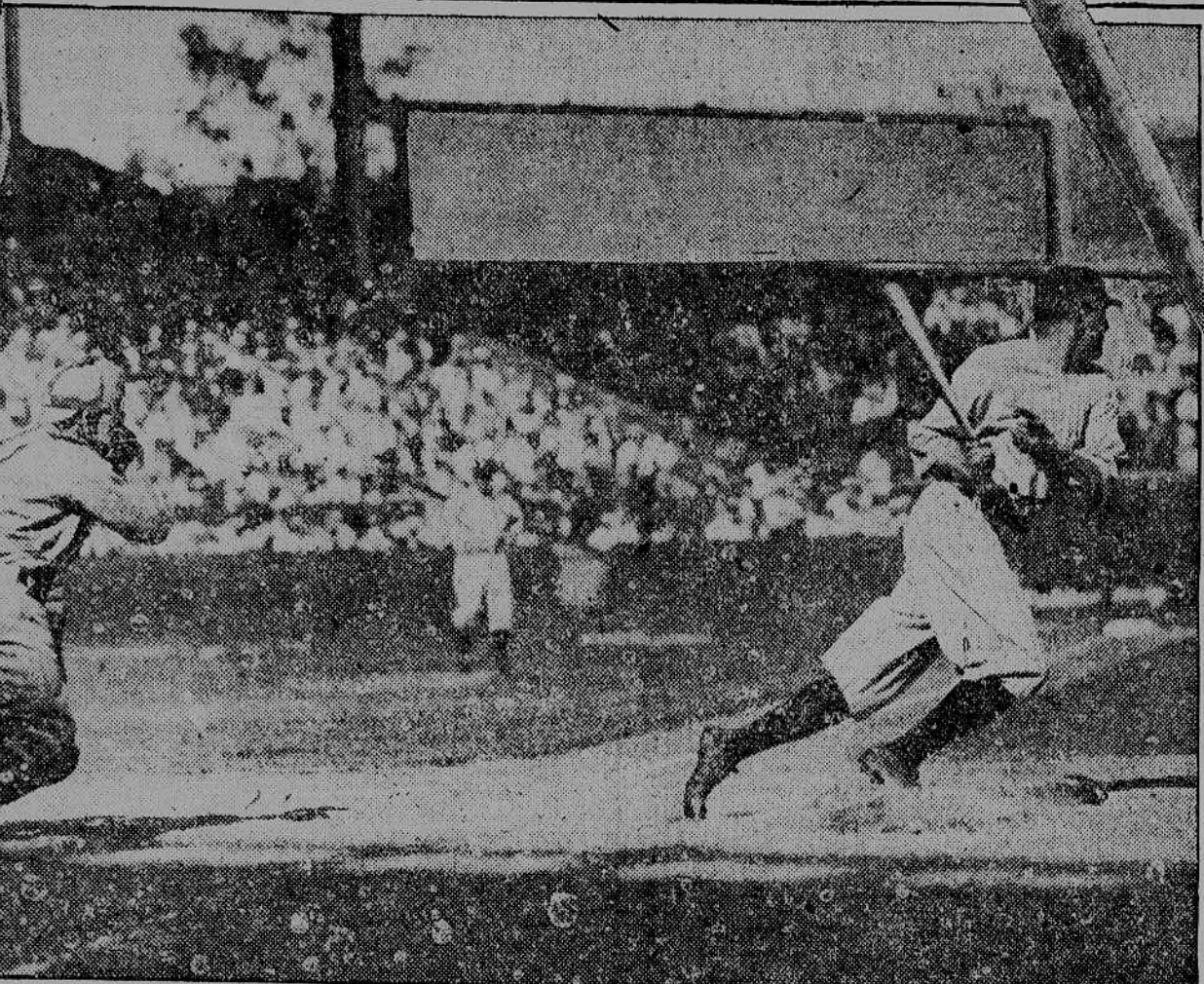




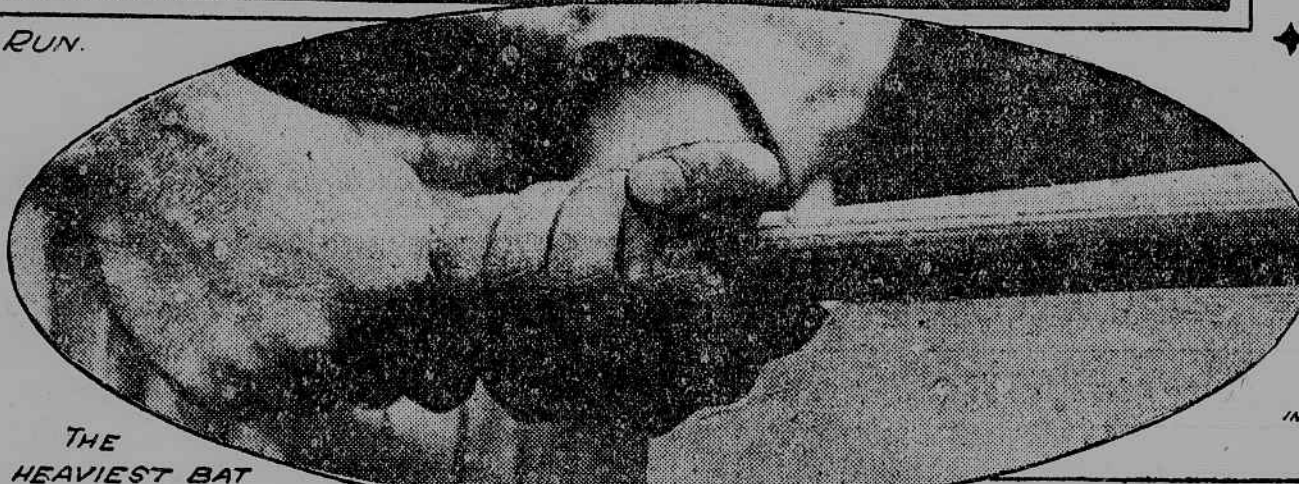
# "Did Babe Ruth Get Another One To-day?" Not "How Did the Game Come Out?" Now the Great American Question



OFF FOR A HOME RUN.



START OF THE SWING

AND THE  
"FOLLOW THROUGH"THE  
HEAVIEST BAT  
IS AS A STRAW IN  
THESE HANDS.INTERNATIONAL  
PHOTOSMRS. RUTH APPLAUDS A "HOMER"  
C. CURTIS PHOTOEVERY HOME RUN MEANS A PAIR OF SHOES FOR THESE  
ORPHANS. © UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD

By W. O. McGeehan

IF THE late lamented Shakespeare were a baseball writer he might use a line that he wasted upon some more or less obscure hero of antiquity and say of "Babe" Ruth, "He doth bestride the narrow baseball fields like a Colossus." For "Babe" Ruth is Hercules and Thor reincarnated, the Colossus of Swat. His bat is the club of Hercules and the hammer of Thor, the symbol of sheer, primitive might before which the puny folk bow and offer worship.

But for the game of baseball, the youngest game of the youngest people, George Herman Ruth, the "Babe" Ruth who dwarfs all other personalities in the daily news, might have been a peaceful cigar-maker or perhaps a third-rate heavyweight pugilist instead of the national idol of the American people.

The "Babe" was Fortune's darling, though Fortune concealed her great and kindly intentions as far as he was concerned when the "Babe" was a boy. For the "Babe" was born left-handed. Hercules was a right-hander. Thor never was pictured as wielding his hammer from the port side. None of the heroes of antiquity, as far as can be ascertained, was a southpaw. Harry Leon Wilson was the first novelist to put a left-hander in the near-hero class, and he did it in a half-hearted fashion.

Moreover, little George Herman Ruth was a half-orphan at a very early age and was sent to an institution for orphans. He was nearly an orphan boy, and, according to the Sanford and Merton books, he should have taken a morbid sort of point of view at an early age and learned something useful. But the youth of "Babe" Ruth was applied mostly to the study of the great American game of baseball.

You are not going to draw any conventional moral from the early boyhood of "Babe" Ruth. He was not a particularly industrious or thrifty lad, chockful of conventional virtues. He was just a normal, chuckle-headed combination of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. He was just natural and just human.

FORTUNATELY the boyhood of "Babe" Ruth was entrusted to men who understand human nature, and particularly the human boy—the Christian Brothers, of Baltimore. The fraternity is not limited to Baltimore. It is all over the world. It is made up of big-hearted men, consecrated to the work of making men out of the raw material.

They had charge of the bringing up of George Herman Ruth and they have turned over to the world the Colossus of Swat. It is due to their human understanding that George Herman Ruth was not thwarted and turned aside into more prosaic lines of endeavor.

More romantic than any of the

boy romances of Tattered Tom and Ragged Dick, by Horatio Alger Jr. is the rise of "Babe" Ruth. The Alger heroes became mere bankers or traction magnates, but George Herman Ruth, the waif of Baltimore, became "Babe" Ruth, at whose shrine bankers and traction magnates burn incense. Ever and anon these jaded near-successes pick up the tape, not to see the condition of the market, but to learn whether the latest is the forty-fifth or forty-sixth home run knocked out by the "Babe" for the season.

And these heroes envy "Babe" Ruth the left-handed, the boy who was regarded as far from bright in his classes. For the "Babe" can hit them out with the joyous freedom of Hercules swinging his club or Thor throwing his hammer through the clouds. All the tricks of the pitchers are vain when he faces them, and all the walls of the baseball parks are lowered when his bat crashes against the baseball. Homer would have loved him if the blind singer had had a season pass to the Polo Grounds.

THAT Ruth is the greatest batter of them all is admitted by two members of the old Orioles, and when two members of the old Orioles agree upon anything, that makes it official and irrefutable. If there is anybody so ignorant of important American history that he does not know who the old Orioles are, we will explain, more in pity than in indignation, that the old Orioles were members of the greatest baseball team of a generation or so ago.

The two Orioles who made the admission that "Babe" Ruth was the greatest baseball player in the whole world are Wilbert Robinson, manager of the Brooklyn National League baseball team, and Joseph Kelly, scout for the Yankees. Both of these gentlemen are grandfathers and citizens of high repute in the city where they dwell, which also happens to be the home of "Babe" Ruth. Wilbert Robinson was a catcher, and still holds the world's record for consecutive base hits in one game. Joseph Kelly was an outfielder of sorts on the old Orioles, and his present occupation is "ivory hunting," looking upon baseball players and appraising them at their true worth to their

employers and to the national pastime.

These two authorities admitted to me in the presence of witnesses that never, even in the days of the old Orioles, was there a baseball player who could hit like "Babe" Ruth. Consider the importance of this admission. The members of the old Orioles are the most conservative persons in the world. Never before have they admitted that any player of the present was anywhere near as wonderful as the players of their glorious day.

"He can hit them harder than anybody, and he can hit them oftener," they admitted from the fullness of their hearts. They did not qualify the statement. They did not assert

that the pitchers were less canny and that the ball parks were smaller.

They admitted that the heroes of their day were lost in the shadow of the Colossus of Swat. They admitted that even in the days when the old Orioles were young "Babe" Ruth would have loomed up above them all.

That Ruth broke all big league records for home run getting last year is in the book. That he has broken his own record this year and is on the way to setting a mark far beyond the misty horizons of the baseball world is known. But the old Orioles have explained away the performances of other more modern heroes of baseball. Ruth's achievements—they admit ungrudgingly,

that is almost as marvelous as the achievements themselves.

ONCE upon a time the youth of this land worshiped another young giant, a right-hander and an exponent of another and elder sport—John L. Sullivan. The right arm of John L. Sullivan was mighty in its day, but the left arm of "Babe" Ruth is mightier in its day and generation in the matter of sheer numbers of worshippers.

They used to block the corridors of the hotels, and even the streets, to see the mighty John L. pass. They do that in the case of "Babe" Ruth, too. It is not for me to disparage the memory of John L. Sullivan, the gladiator, in the days of his greatest

ring glory, but I think that his admirers saw that particular John L. through rose glasses and that they worshiped an illusion.

The John L. Sullivan of the later day, the John L. who beat down his own worst enemy and lifted up his self-respect from the muck, was the John L. that should have been worshiped, for that John L. Sullivan was a mighty gladiator. The John L. Sullivan who knocked out ring antagonists with a right-hand punch to the jaw was a mere mass of brawn and muscle, but the gray and fat old John L. who conquered himself was the true fighter.

But we are considering the John L. that was the popular idol, the brawny man who was followed by the men and the boys and cheered when he stalked abroad. He was not a particularly affable character.

This big "Babe" Ruth is a far more likable person. He is full of good nature and the joy of living. He is a modest enough young man, and he knows his limitations, though he acknowledges no limitations as far as the baseball diamonds and the fences around them are concerned. He is not falsely modest to the point of affectation, for he has that supreme confidence in himself that comes after certain achievement. But he will not play to the gallery consciously. He likes the gallery and he understands it, and he likes to have it understand him.

Ruth is, perhaps, too simple, or it may be too wise, to try to fool his gallery, as other stars of his own game or stars in other lines of endeavor have tried to do in vain. For nobody can fool his gallery. No truly wise man ever tried.

THE best judges of a man are the men with whom he works or with whom he plays. "Babe" Ruth, naturally, is the highest salaried ballplayer on the New York Yankees. He might, if he were like some of the stars of baseball or stars of some of the arts, claim all the privileges of a star and hold himself aloof from his fellow players. Here again is the simplicity or the wisdom of "Babe" Ruth. He plays the game with the team and for the team, and the men he plays with know it and appreciate it. "Babe" Ruth will even make the "college try" to get a base on an impossible chance. The "college try" is the veteran professional's term of contempt for zealous endeavor that seems futile on the face of it.

On the "Babe" makes the two

owners of the Yankees, Colonels Ruppert and Huston, shudder with apprehension when he huris himself against a wall to get a fly ball, or when he throws his huge bulk through the air in the effort to steal a base. They rejoice in his spirit and his wholehearted way of playing, but at the same time they perspire with apprehension lest something should happen that would deprive them of the most expensive investment in professional baseball.

Some stars have disrupted baseball teams, rousing jealousies, but "Babe" Ruth, admittedly the greatest star of them all, has made the Yankees a team. The advent of the "Babe" has brought them the chance of that "world's series dough," which should be something like \$7,000 a player. It has also made them the team of the big leagues. They do not begrudge the "Babe" the homage that is paid him. As far as Ruth is concerned, there is no professional jealousy on the Yankee team.

Just to what extent the present prosperity of professional baseball is due to "Babe" Ruth I would not care to say, but it is considerable. When I first trailed West with the Yankees, they told me in Chicago that there had been little or no interest in the Chicago White Sox. But

they turned out to the extent of 20,000 a day and upward to see the "Babe" "bust one."

Once, with the score 2 to 1 in the eighth and a tense pitchers' duel on, the Chicago pitcher passed "Babe" Ruth. Ten thousand people started to walk out of Comiskey Park. There remained yet the chance of the melodramatic ninth inning rally, but the ten thousand had lost all interest in the game for the afternoon. It was clear that they were not going to see "Babe" Ruth knock a home run, and nothing else mattered.

Civic pride, inter-city rivalry, interest in the national game were minor considerations. The "Babe" was not due to "bust one."

IN CLEVELAND I was talking to two tired business men early in the afternoon.

Said one of them gravely: "This 'Babe' Ruth is a menace. He is responsible to a large degree for the lack of production in these manufacturing towns around the Lakes. Go out to the ball park today and you will see thousands of young men taking the afternoon off just to see 'Babe' Ruth 'bust one.' It is really quite serious. What are

(Continued on page three)